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By-Pettigrew, Thomas

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Research shows that social class is a more important variable in determining educational achievement than race. Schools which provide a middle class milieu, therefore, will offer the best opportunities for achievement for Negro students. Consequently, the movement toward decentralization, which may effectively curtail integration, may further handicap Negroes by perpetuating social class segregation. The author feels strongly that integration must begin immediately and that dispersal plans must be started to break down the massive black ghettos in the cities. (NH)

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Thomas Pettigrew, a Professor of Social Psychology at Harvard University and a well-known researcher in the race relations field, laments the increase in racial segregation in our society. Professor Pettigrew emphasizes research findings which indicate that social class milieu is a more important variable in determining educational achievement than race. He contends that since the Negro middle class, despite its recent rapid expansion, is still so small, only racial integration can provide Negro students with the requisite middle class milieu. Professor Pettigrew articulates serious apprehensions about the Bundy Plan in New York City and other decentralization schemes which do not give racial integration the very high priority it must have. He stresses the need to begin "to start now, start someplace, to integrate"--and advocates the initiation of dispersal plans that would at least begin to break down the massive black ghettos found in the nation's urban centers.

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THE CASE FOR SCHOOL INTEGRATION

Thomas Pettigrew,
Associate Professor of Social Psychology,
Harvard University

I am a racial integrationist. I believe that to the extent that we delay or obstruct racial integration, we are endangering the existence of our democratic society. I am more a student of race relations than of education. But I have specialized in the desegregation of schools--and hopefully, their integration--because it is through our schools that the vicious circle described by Gunnar Myrdal can most effectively be broken.

We are far from the ideal of total integration. In fact, our schools are growing more racially segregated, not less. There are more segregated schools in the United States today than there were in 1954 at the time of the Supreme Court decision.

According to Office of Education figures, roughly 18% of the Negro children in the South are now in schools with white children. However, this is an inflated estimate--because 400 Negro children are counted as desegregated when one white child troops into their school. A more realistic

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criterion is the percentage of Negroes in the predominantly white schools in the South; this brings the estimate closer to nine or ten percent. Progress in the South has been slow and painful since 1954.

But in the West and North we have actually regressed. The situation is worse now than it was at the time of the court ruling. Although the Coleman data are probably the best overall data we have on the standard of segregation in our public schools, they undoubtedly underestimate the degree of segregation, since many of the most segregated systems did not cooperate with the survey: Boston, Cleveland, Columbus, Cincinnati, Chicago, Los Angeles, Houston, Wichita, and others.

Choosing schools that are 90 to 100 percent Negro as an extreme definition of segregation, two-thirds of all Negro students in the first grade are in such schools, and one-half of all Negro students in the twelfth grade are in such schools. As far as we can determine through research, segregation effects are most damaging to both Negro and white children in the early grades; unfortunately, segregation is greatest at that point where it does the most damage.

In most of our systems in the United States a predominantly Negro school is the most reasonable index of segregation. Seven out of eight of all Negro children in the first grade in the United States attend a predominantly Negro school, while two-thirds in the twelfth grade attend a predominantly Negro school. White children are even more

segregated than Negro children: four-fifths of the white children in public schools--whether in first grade or twelfth grade--are in schools that are 90 to 100 percent white. So the conclusion of the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights in its 1967 report, Racial Isolation in the Public Schools, is more than justified: "Racial isolation in the schools is intense whether the cities are large or small, whether the proportionate Negro enrollment is large or small, whether they are located North or South."

Racial segregation throughout our society is growing, not decreasing. In Southern cities--Atlanta, for example--patterns of resegregation are beginning to look like the Northern style; so segregation might increase in the near future even faster than it has over the last ten years. This might not be so serious if there were no harmful effects.

Doing research to determine the effects of isolation in schools is extremely difficult, since so much of the rest of American life is also isolated by race and class and religion. But to the extent that we can do it--not just in the Coleman data, but in other data employed in the report of the Commission on Civil Rights--it seems definitely true that segregated schools are damaging to both white and Negro children in much the way that a lot of people thought before such evidence was available. As a matter of fact, the data supported earlier hypotheses to a surprising degree. Social data are usually somewhat "dirty," and never come

out quite as expected; they are seldom very clear in any direction. These data were beautiful data--they fell in line in much the way expected on the basis of actual observations made in the schools.

Race, as it turns out, is not the primary variable: social class is. The Coleman Report and other researches make this point clear. The Coleman Report shows that while the physical quality of the schools varies, it does not vary nearly as much as had been supposed; and that physical facilities do not have an appreciable effect on the achievement of the children in these schools. Some people have misinterpreted this, almost making it sound as though it were unnecessary to have walls around the school--the wind could come blowing through without affecting the children's achievement. This is not what Coleman is saying. He could only measure what exists now--not what might be done with the aid of new and innovative educational facilities. He did find that the social class of students attending a given school was the chief school variable of a child's achievement score. This parameter can be measured crudely by tabulating the educational level of all of the parents of all of the children in a given school. The higher their educational level, the higher the academic achievement of children of all backgrounds--white and black, rich and poor, urban and rural--is likely to be.

Social class milieu, therefore, turns out to be more important for educational achievement than racial integration.

But only one Negro in four is middle class (whether defined by income, white collar occupation, or high school graduation), while more than 60 percent of white Americans are middle class. The Negro middle class has expanded very rapidly since 1940 when it was only 5 percent of the total Negro population. It has expanded five times, even relative to the growing sizes of Negro-American communities. But in spite of that rapid increase, we need racial desegregation to provide a predominantly middle class milieu, simply because there are not enough middle class Negroes; even if they all went to public schools and lived in the right places, there would not be enough to provide a middle class milieu in the schools.

The Civil Rights Commission Report attempted to go one step further and find out if there were a racial composition effect over and above the very powerful social class effect. We believe there is, but it is by no means as large as the social class effect. We believe that there are important effects for the achievement of Negro children in white classrooms--<u>classrooms</u> not schools, since of course we have segregated classrooms within schools which are often the result of so-called ability grouping. We know about these effects, but we can also show that white children do not suffer in terms of achievement scores as long as they are in the majority.

Even more striking than the achievement effects--true for both children and adults, white and Negro, in the

Commission study--was the effect on racial attitudes and behavior. Here, where the differences are very large, white and Negro children who had been to school with each other prefer interracial friends and prefer interracial schools.

This last point, incidentally, is one of the troubles with the freedom of choice plan in the South and in many places in the North. That is, we have had nothing but segregation of the children for so long that when we leave them the freedom of choice they will choose what they have always had. There are blacks who have known only segregation, and who will therefore tend to continue to choose segregation and separatism. We are now seeing the result of this in the current separatist movement. On the other side of the coin, the whites who have only known homogeneous white schools will continue to prefer and perpetuate that arrangement. This is a route that the Kerner Commission rightly shows we have been traveling for some time, producing not one nation indivisible but two nations divisible by race, separate and unequal. The way to continue on this route is to continue segregated schools, to make them even more segregated. The way to begin to turn a corner is to have more desegregation of schools.

[Notice, I've tried to use the words 'integration' and 'desegregation' differently. Desegregation is the mere mix: it can be good, it can be bad, but it is a prerequisite for integration. Integration refers to the

quality of the racial contact. It is not just a mix, but also involves cross-racial acceptance. This is where I think interracial faculties are important--with Negroes as principals and top members of the public school staff. This is important in that the norms which the students are expected to follow are communicated by the leadership of the school system. That's integration.]

One can say: "Well, that's all very nice, but the kids lose what they gain from integrated schools when they go back to their all black or all white neighborhoods, and because they live their lives later in separate situations; thus any good effects achieved in those interracial schools are washed out." That has been a common hypothesis; it is usually stated as fact, although--as with most things in the area of race these days--it is unsupported by any data. So the Civil Rights Commission tested this hypothesis with adults throughout the United States. We could only work in the North and West, because desegregation in the South has been too limited and too recent to show results. We simply asked people what kind of schooling they had had. Then, controlling for social class origins, we compared Negro adults who had known interracial schooling with those who had not, and we compared whites who had known interracial schooling with those who had not.

The two comparisons differ in the same way: those who had known interracial experience as children were very different adults. The early effects did not wash out.

These people had contrasting attitudes toward each other in many ways; but in addition to attitudes, their overt behavior was different. The Negro and white American adults who had known interracial education as children were more likely than the other Negroes and whites to live on an interracial block, and also were more likely to send <u>their</u> children to an interracial school. This is the best endorsement of interracial schooling that one could ask: these people, the products of integration, strive to provide an interracial education for their children--often at some sacrifice, particularly for the Negro parents. But--remember--on the other side of <u>this</u> coin is the finding that Negroes and whites who have not had this experience favor segregated schooling for their children--sometimes, in the case of white Southerners, at considerable financial sacrifice. Given the data already mentioned--that we are seeing <u>more</u> segregation, not less--this can only mean that we are producing yet another generation of white and black bigots: people who will not accept each other when they reach adulthood.

I might also add that Negroes who had known interracial schools are making more money today than Negroes who had not known interracial schools. And, significantly, they are more likely to be working in a white collar job.

It is a human tendency, when one has a problem, to look for the villains; to feel that if these villains were replaced by good men, our problems would go away. If only

that were true! Our problems are less the machinations of evil men than the products of outmoded social structures.

If one asks the typical American citizen what is blocking desegregation in our schools, he will mention people like George Wallace, and Mrs. Hicks in Boston. Such people have not helped much, to put it mildly; but they are not the basic cause of our problems. The basic cause is structural: the way we organize our school districts, especially in the main metropolitan areas. There are over 75 school districts in metropolitan Boston and 96 in metropolitan Detroit. These figures are not unusual. There are more than 26,000 school districts in the United States, and not even the richest country in the world can afford that many. We don't <u>have</u> 26,000 good ones, or anything close to that number. To me, this implies that one of the basic needs of many of our urban areas is consolidation, not decentralization, of schools; and particularly it implies the need for metropolitan cooperation <u>before</u> consolidation.

Think of a visitor from some place, preferably a non-Western country, coming in to look at our school system. He is told that there are 26,000 of them, and so--having read books on the efficiency of American management and so forth--he assumes that the schools must reflect this efficiency. So he says: "Well, I've seen cities like Denver where they told me they didn't have problems like this; they have only 17 school districts in metropolitan Denver." All right, what about those 17? He would probably

assume that they buy common supplies together, to save money. How many school districts actually buy supplies together? Very few. We lack even the most minimal cooperation.

In other words, we run a very inefficient system, and there are limits to how long we can continue to run schools in this manner. But from the race relations point of view, the way we district our schools guarantees that we will segregate the races, as well as class and religion; the central cities are rapidly becoming more Negro while the suburbs are rapidly becoming more white. Even if there were no segregation within districts at all, there would still be a rather intense pattern of segregation across districts.

Of course, we have segregation within districts as well, and this leads me to the second major cause of segregation in big central cities: the existence of private schools, parochial schools in particular. Again, it is not the work of evil men. As parochial schools have grown in our central cities, they have tended more and more to draw whites from the pool of school-age children, making the public school system more and more Negro, by definition. Only six to seven percent of all Negro-Americans are Roman Catholic, and they are not spread evenly over the Negro population of the United States, (they are concentrated in such cities as Chicago, St. Louis, and New Orleans). This means that de facto parochial systems will tend to be white,

and will tend to exacerbate the problem of segregation in the public schools that much more.

The third basic course of segregation in our central cities is the careful misplacement of schools, the zone-drawing, and all the imagination expended for 50 years on how to segregate the schools. This may be called the Hicks-Wallace phenomenon. We are all familiar with it, even if we do not do much about it. But I do not believe it is the most fundamental factor--the other two are.

Looked at from this perspective, decentralization is hardly a technique for integration--not typically, at any rate. To believe that decentralization, as defined by the Bundy Report leads to integration is a pretty dangerous conception. It is clear that Mario Fantini* and others who wrote and sold the Bundy Report do not give integration a very high priority. This is clear from what they write and from what they say publicly and privately. From my perspective, nothing could be more dangerous or erroneous. I should say, too, that decentralization, like Black Power, has almost as many meanings as there are people who use the term. I want to define it in its special New York variety.

New York is unique in its bigness. There are real issues that the Bundy Report defines in New York's way--real issues that they are trying to get to. There is a

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*Executive Secretary of the panel that prepared the Bundy Report, currently program officer at the Ford Foundation.

concept in a particular sociological study of large organizations called "effective organizational span of control," and I am convinced with many of the critics of New York schools, like Kenneth Clark, that the New York school system long ago passed that point. One visit to 110 Livingston Street will clearly demonstrate what ineffective span of control means. New York has clearly reached a point where control cannot effectively be as centralized as it is now. And that is the real issue. Span of control is a function of size. In most American school systems the span of control is <u>not</u> an issue as it is in New York.

Decentralization's second real issue is parental involvement. I want to stress both words: "parental" and "involvement." Parental--not organized leaders who are not parents of the children in the schools. In the three local control school districts in New York City, in the Ford Foundation's abortive experiment, many of the parents have no more say about what's going on than they ever had. But leaders interested in power--though not always interested in education--have a great deal to say. Their influence is <u>not</u> necessarily bad, but I think the real issue is <u>parental</u> involvement more than the political power issue.

<u>Involvement</u> is not synonymous with control. I believe that full control, as its advocates talk about it, is possible only if the local board has control of and full access to the tax base. To the extent that it does not, it does not really have control. I'm afraid that this false

sense of control is being perpetrated on some of the parents in some of these areas in and out of New York. It's a kind of fraud; they think they have more control than they really have. We ought to call it something closer to what it is in terms of involvement. Involvement means decision power; it does not mean total control. And I doubt that the American political system is going to allow absolute control and decision making power to a local group when the tax base extends beyond the geographical area in question.*

These are real issues, and they cannot be overlooked or swept under the rug. But they can be effectively faced without some of the damaging consequences that I am sure would flow from the Bundy Report idea of 30 to 60 little districts--homogeneous districts, not only in terms of race, but in terms of class (which would be more damaging than the race, if one accepts the Coleman findings), ethnicity, and religion. In other words, 60 ghettos would be formed, and sealed in structurally; local people would have a vested interest in keeping the structure that way, even if the education remained inferior. I think this would be a regressive step, and regressive steps would only exacerbate the present harm.

If these experiments in local control fail, then, they will fail because they lack direct access to the tax

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*It should be recalled that this speech was delivered two months before the decentralization issue plunged New York City into a major political crisis.

base. (There are also a number of other problems that have not really been faced in these schools.) If they fail, racists will--for the first time in education--be able to blame the deprived for their own deprivation. Teachers, principals, and superintendents will not be blamed; the school board of the whole city will not be blamed. The blame will fall on the people who ostensibly controlled their own destiny.

Floyd McKissick, in his letter to The New Republic, used the Coleman Report data on fate control to show that Negroes who had fate control did better--much better--on achievement scores, controlling for other variables; he presented this as an argument for separatism, black schools, black teachers, black control. He omitted one finding of the Coleman Report: fate control is much more likely to be found in Negro children who are in desegregated schools, not within allblack schools.

The critical concept to be considered, it seems to me, is the community. We speak of the community--community control, community school board--but how are we going to define community? Very little attention has been paid to this in the Bundy Report. I gather from Fantini and others that they have in mind homogeneous communities. They see this as a positive; I see it as a negative--and that difference is really what separates us. If one defines community in terms of a heterogeneous area, then decentralization is not in conflict with integration, but, on the

contrary, is one way of helping to achieve integration in a large city. Decentralization and integration are not necessarily in conflict; the way they have been presented in New York, they are in conflict.

Dan Dodson of NYU has shown that it is possible to draw district lines in New York City which would aid public school desegregation. He showed that this can be done; but it can be done only if community is defined in heterogeneous terms, and not in homogeneous terms. And this is why I greatly favor the Regents' Plan for decentralization, rather than the Bundy Plan. Up to now we have been loosely defining it in homogeneous terms. We're saying in effect that integration is dead; that it's out of style now--whites do not want it, blacks do not want it. It may indeed be ideologically unfashionable; but the need for integrated schools is even greater than ever. Moreover, public opinion data clearly reveal that the majority of both white and Negro Americans still favor integrated education.

Let's look at the alternatives, not just in education but throughout the whole spectrum of society:

One alternative is to do nothing; to drift, do a little here, a little there; little bribes, particularly in May and June, to see if we can hold off the riots. If we keep doing that, then, when riots occur, we will increasingly rely on repressive force. We will continue to drift toward a police state that no Americans, black or white, can really accept as palatable for their country. We have

already seen portents--and not just in the actions of some well-known racist politicians. In New Jersey a liberal governor threw the Bill of Rights into the ocean in his Plainfield search for weapons. If this is the kind of action our _better_ political leaders take when the fear quotient is high, then we had better not drift down that road much longer.

That forces us to do _something_, but what kind of overall strategy should we adopt? Let me introduce two new, as yet relatively value-free terms: '_enrichment_' and '_dispersal_'. By varying these two approaches in different patterns, one arrives at four possible strategies. One of these--the 'enrichment alone' strategy--I think Mr. Nixon would support, as well as the Black Power separatists. (I stress _separatists_, because many Black Power advocates are not separatists at all. Recent polls show that 80 percent of Negro adults still favor integration--that percentage has not declined during the last couple of years.)

The '_enrichment alone_' strategy--and I believe that Bundy Plan decentralization is an enrichment alone strategy--is simply to pour money and services into the ghetto. The purpose is to make the ghetto more habitable without spreading it; without dispersing the populace. It is to be made self-contained. Thus, job opportunities are not created in the suburbs but in the ghettos--by building factories there. Public housing is not scattered, but concentrated in the ghetto. This alone makes the strategy a very dangerous one,

because--to use Kenneth Clark's word--it threatens to "embalm" the ghetto, to institutionalize it further, to deepen its roots, to build further vested interests for separation. Decentralization, á la Bundy, is a facet of this strategy. Decentralization, á la Regents, would not run this risk if it followed Dodson's guidelines.

The second strategy is dispersal alone, paying no special attention to the ghetto other than attempting to dissolve it. This would have been a difficult strategy even 15 years ago; by now it's clearly too late for dispersal alone. A few quick figures will point this out: From 1950 to 1960 the 212 central cities in metropolitan areas in the United States grew annually by 320,000 Negroes. During that same period there was an annual suburban increase of 60,000 Negroes. From 1960 to 1966 the central city figure has grown from 320,000 to 400,000 Negroes annually, while in suburban areas it is actually decreasing from 60,000 to 33,000 a year. This is the alarming part--we are regressing in residence patterns as well as in schools. Of course, the two trends are tied together. Simply to hold the line--not make the ghettos smaller, but keep Harlem, Bedford-Stuyvesant, Watts, and all the rest from growing larger--would require the annual movement of almost half a million Negroes into the suburbs. This is not likely to happen soon. So the "dispersal alone" strategy has no more chance of succeeding than has "enrichment alone."

That leaves us, then, with some combination of the

two. One form would be enrichment primarily, with attempts at some modest dispersal. Some efforts have already been made along these lines. We pass a housing law without effective enforcement procedures. We consider it progress when a suburban block acquires two Negro families. But the overwhelming national effort and expenditure has been going into enrichment programs, such as that in Bedford-Stuyvesant, and into building bigger schools and public housing projects in the geometric center of the ghetto.

The other mix--which I have saved for last because it is the one I strongly advocate--would stress dispersal, even while recognizing that dispersal alone cannot meet all the needs. This does not mean abolishing ghettos; even if they could be dispersed completely. The object is to change the nature of ghettos, not to eliminate them. Look at the difference between North Boston and Boston's Negro ghetto of Roxbury. North Boston is an Italian area: the people who live there do not have to, they live there by choice. Their sons and daughters tend not to live there; they live in suburbia. Therefore, Roxbury cannot be like North Boston; in addition to the Negroes who live in Roxbury because they <u>want</u> to (like Italians in North Boston), there are Negroes who live in Roxbury because they <u>must</u>. As long as Negroes are forced to live in the ghetto, it is not an ethnic area of choice like North Boston but a racial ghetto. It is a prison. Changing the <u>prison</u> quality of ghettos is what we have to do.

We know how to disperse the ghettos. It is not lack of know-how that holds us back--it is a lack of political determination, plus hostility toward open housing on the part of many white citizens. Nevertheless, we could make real strides by combining the dispersal techniques already at our command with enrichment of the ghetto.

What kind of enrichment? Not all types. The criterion I favor is to check always to see if it is productive or counter-productive for later dispersal.

Dispersal, by the way, need not mean salt and pepper. It can mean mini-ghettos. Three out of four Negroes who live in the suburbs live in ghettos--but they are small ghettos. They are better to live in than Harlem, or Bedford-Stuyvesant, because their public services can be integrated--their schools can be integrated, and their facilities are much superior to big ghettos.

Remember, however, that this test for later dispersal must be applied to all enrichment programs. Applied to decentralization, the Bundy Plan does not pass muster while the Regents' Plan potentially could.

This test also applies to new schools. New schools built in the center of the ghetto are counter-productive to dispersal. On the other hand, encouragement of cooperatives and job training in the ghetto should be pushed, because they are productive for dispersal. Other forms of enrichment should be judged by this criterion. I admit that there are marginal cases where the test is difficult

to apply, but I urge that each program be undertaken with the ultimate goal in mind.

Again let me stress that I believe an interracial America to be the only viable America. It is not enough to say that separatism is the road to integration--that could prove to be a classic instance of "doublethink," or "wishfulthink." We have to start now, start someplace, to integrate--as the Kerner Report made very clear.